

The Physician, the Government and the Common Good*

Address of the Retiring President

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The good life is the chief aim of society both collectively for all its members and individually.
—Aristotle.

AT THE Seventy-Third Annual Convention of the National Medical Association in Houston, Texas last year, we proclaimed that the *status quo* of the medical care delivery system of this country could no longer be condoned, that we could not enjoy the "good life" under this system, that radical changes had to be made in view of the fact that 35 million people of this nation go without adequate medical care except under emergency circumstances.

This stand of the NMA was endorsed by the visit and address of the President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, when he pointed out the inequities that exist in our medical care picture, and exhorted the NMA to do its part individually and collectively to help in implementing corrective programs. He stated that the NMA and the Federal Government should join forces to combat the evils and deficiencies that deprived our nation, hence the significance of my opening quotation and the title of these remarks, "The Physician, The Government and the Common Good."

In the span of one year what wonders this union of Physician and government under God has wrought! Our National Medical Association Foundation Nursing Home Project is off the planning board and in the building stage; Comprehensive Health Units and group practice facilities sponsored by the National Medical Association physicians have been started across the nation; active talent recruitment programs have been started in target areas within the United States in Detroit, Michigan, the tri-state area around Durham, North Carolina, in Chicago, Illinois, St. Louis, Missouri, East St. Louis, Illinois, Atlanta, Georgia, and others, including most importantly the NMAF pilot program in Washington, D.C. Our members have been actively involved in OEO and HEW

Neighborhood Health Centers and Model Cities Programs across the country.

The Talent Recruitment Program was funded by an initial \$50,000 grant from the Weir Foundation and just recently by an appropriation from the Division of Health Manpower of Health Education and Welfare. Through our NMA-AMA Liaison Committee and local action of our constituent societies, we have closed the door against segregation in local and state medical societies. We have made inroads into that subtle and elusive maze of *de facto* segregation on hospital staff appointments. We have representative seats on Advisory Boards of National Health Programs. We have met with officials of the Federal Government and have been invited by the President and Vice President of the United States to affairs of State.

We have made inroads into the problems of hunger and poverty and offered our resources to President Nixon. It has been an honor and a privilege to move as your president this past year in all of these activities and many others that time does not permit recounting. Now I pass the torch of leadership over to a worthy successor, Dr. Julius Hill, the incoming President. As you ascend closer to the sun, be not like Icarus, but prove through your endeavors that we can endure the penetrating light and heat of the source of all our energy.

The programs of the NMA cannot flourish under yesterday's fiscal programs and yesterday's individual commitments. No longer can a few dedicated leaders in the elected offices and the headquarters of the NMA carry the full thrust of the programs. The NMA desperately needs each individual's full commitment and involvement. Each leader will need the collective support of its membership and that of our Woman's Auxiliary. There is yet much to be done. Our national programs and involvement have just begun.

We are a minority, but God is on the side of better health care for the poor and the disadvan-

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taged, and equal rights and opportunity for all.

By heritage we, the NMA, have been the voice of the liberal arm of organized medicine; a voice crying out in the wilderness of the South and on the pavement jungles of the North; a voice not receiving national attention until we spoke out for Social Security health insurance under President John F. Kennedy and for Medicare under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

We trust that President Richard M. Nixon will heed our voice. His recent proposals in the field of welfare we view as good, but just a beginning, hardly enough to make a dent in our massive poverty problem. We stand to make ready to aid as we can in his further proposals.

As the great philosopher, Thomas Aquinas said so often, "*Operatio sequitur esse.*" ("As a being acts, so he is.")

As you act and support your new NMA president in the attainment of our goal, "the good life" for all men, so you are and so will be the National Medical Association. Let your convictions and actions be manifest. Let your voices be heard now, collectively and individually, across the nation in a mighty crescendo from all component and constituent societies from the rock-bound coast of Maine to the sunny shores of California and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf. Let your voices be heard from the plains of Kansas to the mountaintops of Colorado.

*Lift every voice and sing, 'till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of liberty
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on 'till victory is won!*

(Leffall, from page 403)

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(Jenkins, from page 427)

should be put to the task of remolding a black family structure compatible with its cultural heritage and capable of providing for the protection and survival of its members. Every effort should be extended toward bringing about an early reconciliation of blacks and whites as peer groups, respectful of their human dignity and aware of their interdependence.

The greatest portion of our efforts should be devoted toward all measures calculated to bring about emotional self-sufficiency. This would include support of measures that would allow full and active participation of every person in this country in the social, economic, and political life of our nation.

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